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Commencement 2004

5/28/04—Addressing the Boston College Law School class of 2004, Former Acting Solicitor General and Duke's Douglas B. Maggs Professor of Law Walter Dellinger urged the graduates to be civil to each other, and to serve the law by working together, rather than against one another.

"I think what our greatest influences have done for us is to read us for the best that we can be," Dellinger said. "None of us can aspire to be Lincoln, or King, or Madison. But there is something that each of us can do. Try to do something about the loss of civility in American public life. As we are fighting our own battles, understand that those who differ, do so in large measure because they see the world in different terms, and they are seeking the right and the goodness as best they can."

Dellinger praised the Law School for its sense of community. "Boston College Law School is known for more than just academic excellence," he said "There is about this place a sense that people care about one another. Take that with you as you leave here, and make the school proud of you."

BC Law Dean John H. Garvey praised Dellinger's commitment to the law, calling him a "pioneer" during his term as Acting Solicitor General. "Mr. Dellinger argued 9 cases – more than any S.G. in over 20 years," Dean Garvey said. "His cases involved such pioneering inquiries as physician-assisted suicide, the line-item veto, the Brady gun control legislation, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the constitutionality of remedial services for parochial school children."

Two hundred and seventy-three graduates received degrees at the Law School's 72nd Commencement exercises. Receiving the school's highest awards, the Founders' Medals, were Cynthia Lichtenstein and John Flackett, both former professors at BC Law, Joan Lukey, a 1974 graduate, and Mr. Dellinger. Lukey, a former president of the Boston Bar Association, is a senior partner in the litigation department at Hale & Dorr and is the first woman elected to the firm's Executive Committee.

The Founder's Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the Law School. The Medal is named after the Reverend John B. Crendon, S.J. who was instrumental in founding the Law School in 1929 and whose dedication to academic excellence and professionalism was the inspiration for the Founder's Medal. Recipients of the Founder's Medal embody the traditions of professionalism, scholarship and service which the Law School seeks to instill in its students.

Dean Garvey, presiding over his fifth commencement, spoke of the virtue of hope. "Hope has wings because it reaches toward something beyond: in the Olympics, farther, higher, faster; at weddings, the joy of married life; at funerals, the bliss of the eternal," Garvey said. "It seems like a simple, natural passion always turned to the 'on' position. That's how we feel at commencement. It's a beginning. There is no past. The future is long. There lie before us the prospects of success, fame, fortune, satisfaction; partnership, honor, election to high office, security for our loved ones."

Mr. Dellinger is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Yale University

Law School, and clerked for Associate Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black in the Court's 1968-69 term. In addition to serving as Douglas B. Maggs Professor of Law at Duke University, he is also is the head of appellate practice at O'Melveny & Myers in Washington, D.C. Professor Dellinger served as acting Solicitor General for the 1996-97 Term of the Supreme Court.

Prior to his appointment as acting Solicitor General, Professor Dellinger served in numerous other capacities in the Clinton Administration. In 1993 Dellinger was nominated by the President to be Assistant Attorney General and head of the Office of Legal Counsel and was confirmed by the Senate in October 1993. During his three years as Assistant Attorney General, he served as the Department's principal legal advisor to the Attorney General and the President.

Professor Dellinger has published articles on constitutional issues for scholarly journals, has testified more than twenty-five times before committees of the Congress, and has given endowed lectures at numerous American and European universities.

Boston College Law School opened in 1929 in a small downtown Boston office building with 54 students and two full-time faculty members. Currently ranked 29th in the country by the annual US News & World Report survey, the law school's highly qualified students are drawn from more than 230 colleges and universities across the United States, as well as in other countries. More than 7,850 applicants competed for 260 seats in the entering class this year. The law school's 10,000 alumni practice in 49 states and several foreign countries, holding positions in major law firms, corporate in-house legal departments, the judiciary, government agencies, private industry, academic and public interest organizations, and serving as elected state legislators and members of the U.S. Congress.